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Edited by KATHLEEN BLISS

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NEWS-LETTER

THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRISTMAS

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

SUPPLEMENT

THE MISERY OF MAN AND THE FATHERLY LOVE OF GOD
BY
WALTER DIRKS

THE SUPPLEMENT to this News-Letter is a long one, and to some of our readers the subject may seem an unusual choice for a Christmas number, since it is not customary to talk about the suffering of humanity at a time when most people are thinking, or trying to think, of gifts and gaiety.

There are many inner frames of mind in which to celebrate Christmas. One is to make it a time of make-believe, when for a moment we forget what the world is like and enjoy ourselves after our own fashion. If we are religious we can heighten the enjoyment of getting out of the everyday world for a bit by using the Christmas story and its traditional re-telling in song and worship to transport us to a Bethlehem long ago, where the star shines down and shepherds see a vision of angels and wise men bring gifts. It is some sort of a compensation for the lack of any guiding star or any vision of angels on our daily path through the world if for a few days we can contrive to re-live these things in the imagination. The other way of celebrating Christmas is, instead of allowing ourselves wholly to be carried back two thousand years, somehow to experience an Incarnation brought onwards two thousand years into this present world so filled with sorrow and foreboding.

Perhaps it will be thought that in our view the good Christian should never cease from thinking about the miseries of the world and should take even his pleasures as

gloomily as he can. That is far from what we mean. If we could never escape, never read detective novels, never give ourselves up to the pleasures of idleness or to sheer enjoyment, we should end up not good but mad. God has made a world where there are almost inconceivable possibilities of suffering, dread, and all-pervading death, and has spangled it all over with objects and experiences of sheer delight. But the world has taken Christmas and has made it a time for suspending everyday experience. Yes, it will even accept visions and angels and stars and shepherds and wise men as part of the paraphernalia, with their nostalgic reminders of a lost age of faith. What is truly affronting to the mind which has lost faith is not so much a suggestion that years ago learned sages and astrologers saw a star and worshipped a Child, but the suggestion that perhaps a scientist in his work might become aware of the Dayspring from on High. Shepherds, perhaps because exceedingly few of us have ever known one personally, are for us the very archetypes of kindly care (is there a single detective novel, one wonders, in which the guilty party turns out to be a shepherd?): it is not so very unimaginable, therefore, that these faraway and unreal people should see visions, but who expects their successors weaving wool in Bradford to be startled by the news that a Child is born? We have surrounded Christmas with escapes and jollifications, and in the process, even for some of us Christians, the very central heart and core of Christmas, the over-powering mystery of God made Man and come among us, slips from our grasp and becomes—though we hardly dare acknowledge it—just one of the things we tell ourselves at Christmas time, and honestly wish we believed in more than we do. We have not celebrated Christmas, if in Church or at home we have succeeded in summoning before the eyes of our imagination the picture of the stable, the Child, the Mother, and have made ourselves there present, by an act of the imagination. It is indeed a part of the truth of the Incarnation that God became *a* man, became that particular baby lying in that particular manger. But He also became Man and took on our mortal flesh. He shared not only the *particular* experiences, in His

earthly ministry, of two not very well adjusted sisters in their country home, of a ruler with a thirst for truth, of a loose-living woman by a well, but also He is, in a sense which we catch only in moments of adoration, or when some experience of life deals hardly with us, present as Man in all the sufferings of men. We worship the Jesus Who was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the King, but the picture is not the one of harmony and simplicity which we should like to make it. At His very birth innocent blood is shed, and the cries of a hundred stricken mothers mingle with the songs of Hallelujah. Even if we are among those who find it difficult to give the full weight of historicity to a narrative so mingled with the imagery of Old Testament prophecy, we can at least admit that this is true of life, that men make joy and slaughter out of God's gifts.

If we sit down quietly to read not just our favourite parts of the story of the birth of Jesus, but the whole of it, the simple yet strange narrative of Matthew and Luke, the penetration into the inner meaning of the mystery in St. John, the prophecies which place it as the culmination of a long series of thoughts, acts, and sufferings which prepared for it, then we allow the Bible to say something to us, and the Incarnation, instead of being a picture painted on its pages whose colours, true enough, will never fade, but whose figures will never move towards us however lovingly we gaze at it, becomes a movement of God to us here and now. Suddenly we hear with the cries of the innocents, the shrieks of several thousand Chinese refugees as the boat sinks under them and the waters swallow up their hope of escape for ever. The homeless family flying to a foreign land seems to gather into its sorrow and its determination the sorrows of the homeless throughout the earth. Far from the necessity of sympathizing with and reaching out a hand to the burden of sorrow which rests upon our fellow men, this drawing near of the Incarnation to us begins to give us, towards the sufferings of men, a new sensitivity.

In a remarkable novel published this year, called *The Plague*,[1] Albert Camus describes an imaginary outbreak of

[1] Hamish Hamilton. 9s. 6d.

bubonic plague in the town of Oran, seen through the eyes of the town's medical officer. Camus is a secular existentialist, and his novel shows how a group of different men and the crowd of the population at large respond to the horror of the plague's developing fury. The doctor, assisted by the quiet presence of his old mother, plods steadily forward on his duty; a Parisian journalist caught there bends every nerve to bring about an illegal escape, and turns down the offer of a passage through the blockade when it finally comes. The central figure, whom none of his friends can place in any profession or any class, works doggedly but with a certain detachment, partaking yet observing. Just before his death he reveals to the doctor the motive spring of his life. He is overwhelmed by the thought of human suffering, and especially by the suffering that is inflicted on men by their fellows. He is determined to pit his life against this suffering. His ambition is to be a saint. But he does not believe in God: in fact, he says that if there were a God he would not feel called upon to strive against suffering or to give up his own desires, for if there were a God it would be His business to deal with this, the outstanding feature of the world He is supposed to have made. It is a novel that Christians ought to read.

There has also just come to this country from France a film which is a little masterpiece on the same theme. It is the story of St. Vincent de Paul, under the title *Monsieur Vincent*. Seventy-five million francs were contributed by a hundred thousand French people to finance its making. The figure of St. Vincent is human and compelling. He, too, is drawn to find his life work among the poor in a ministry to suffering. But the strength of his life comes not from his making a few thrusts and stabs against a torturing scheme of things: all he sees, all to which he ministers, is made bearable by the thought of the divine mercy on which his life is stayed. And when a comparison is made it is not the Christian saint but the secular saint who seems a little overdrawn, a little more than human, and stretches our credulity as we ask whether it is possible for a mortal man to attempt with his bare hands to push back an avalanche

without growing embittered against the forces which make his task unfinishable.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

A subject much under discussion, not only in a theological but in a practical way, is that of Christian hope. It is not difficult to see why this should be so. The general gloom of the times is enough to account for a return to a much neglected aspect of Christianity. A further urgency is given to the discussion by the fact that Christianity is not alone in offering men a hope, but has a powerful rival in the Communist faith which derives much of its influence from the fact that it also has a messianic element in it, the promise of a time of deliverance for the poor and despised of the earth, the promise that all who rally to it are espousing a cause which is bound to triumph on this earth within human history and, according as men labour earnestly for it, within a measurable space of time. What the Christian has to offer as an alternative in the way of hope is scoffed at as so much "pie in the sky when you die". Certainly it would be difficult to find Christians who now preach a gospel of unlimited compensation for hard work, low pay and bad conditions, in a sweet by-and-by. That kind of interpretation of Christian hope belonged to an era when economic laws were thought to be as immutable as the law of gravity. It was a response to economic fatalism.

It sometimes looks as though Christians are beginning to make the same sort of response to a widely prevailing international fatalism. It is difficult both to believe that atomic war is inevitable and to hold on to an expectation of a Kingdom of God on earth. Some Christian propagandists in this country have already been heard to say that Christianity is a faith which enables men to live without earthly hope. The question whether men *can* live without any hope in this world, of whether God has made us beings capable of or intended for such living, when He endowed us with astonishing powers of looking and planning ahead, is one far too big for discussion here. Another question, whether the interpretation of Christian hope as an other-worldly promise is true to the teaching of the Bible, is a subject of

age-old debate, raised again with urgency by the circumstances of our time. Both these questions about the nature of Christian hope carry within them the huge problems of the Christian doctrine of history, which again is coming to the fore and is exciting in some quarters even more interest than the debate between religion and science. We have obtained from Professor Butterfield, Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, the promise of four Supplements in the New Year on Christianity and History, a subject on which he has been lecturing to crowded audiences in Cambridge this autumn.

The question of Christian hope is not, therefore, to be disposed of in a few lines of a News-Letter, but one aspect of it is illuminatingly touched upon in Canon M. A. C. Warren's book, *The Truth of Vision*.[1] One does not expect exhaustive treatises from authors who leave home before seven every morning to come to London to deal with the practical affairs of a great Missionary Society. The question he tackles in practical fashion and out of a wide experience of, and a profound belief in, the missionary activity of the Church, is the relationship of the Christian hope to the task of the Church in the world. " Is hope," he asks, " an active and dynamic sense of expectation, which looks for and finds a divine activity everywhere and then identifies itself with that activity, or is it, in fact, an attitude of resignation, genuine in its piety but quite incapable of making any kind of challenging impact upon the earth ? " He suggests that part of the reason why we find it so difficult to answer the question, what is Christian hope, is that we have lost faith in the on-going mission of the Church, or, not being sure what that mission is, are disappointed at the Church's failure. History takes its course : it is not being directed by the Church, and it is sheer illusion to say so. But Canon Warren has not lost faith in the Church's mission. The Church, in his view, " is in the world to redeem the world, by preparing the world for the coming of the Kingdom." The Church is everywhere a minority ; nor can Canon Warren find any warrant in Scripture for the hope that it

[1] The Canterbury Press, 9s. 6d.

will ever be anything else. Nevertheless, when as a faithful minority it has performed its task of preaching the Gospel throughout the length and breadth of the inhabited globe, it has done what its Lord commanded—it has made the necessary preparations for Him to bring the promised Kingdom. His point of view is expressed with simplicity and conviction, and though it could and should be criticized it has at least the merit, lacking in so many attempted expositions of the nature of Christian hope, of tying together the practical obedience of the Church daily in the world with the eschatological expectation of the end of history and the return of our Lord.

THE SUPPLEMENT

Dr. Walter Dirks is one of the Editors of the *Frankfurter Hefte*, a monthly periodical launched after the war by a group of Catholic laymen. It soon rose to a pre-eminent position among periodicals, being read by Catholics, Protestants and non-Christians alike, and achieved a circulation of over seventy thousand. We are grateful to the *Frankfurter Hefte* for permission to translate and re-publish this article which appeared in its pages.

Kathleen Bliss

P.S. We have received a post card from Professor Karl Barth warning us that another crisis in ecumenical understanding is blowing up. It is about the reference in his Supplement to the hooves of the devil (" Has he only two in America ? ") " I was not asking," the post card runs, " whether the devil has in America *only two*, but whether he has in America *more than one* cloven feet. On the continent he has decidedly only *one* hoof, the other foot being a foot of the human kind. What about the devil in Great Britain ? " We are delighted to have it in our power to nip so grave a misunderstanding in the bud by apologizing to Professor Barth for our failure to expunge from out text an " *only* " which was not in his. But we extend our apology no further : distinguished denizens of the nether regions, we feel, deliberately deceive us about their anatomy and location, and deserve all they get in consequence.

THE MISERY OF MAN AND THE FATHERLY LOVE OF GOD

By WALTER DIRKS

It is not fifteen years since a writer, when he wanted to give an impressive example of the dark and terrible things of human life, thought that he must conjure up before the minds of his readers the picture of a man who had suddenly gone mad and slaughtered his own children. It is an easier thing for us to-day to demonstrate the cruelty of the world.

We have only to remember. The sight of the bodies shrunken in appearance to black dolls on the pavements of our streets. The ovens of Auschwitz and the jokes of the SS. The way in which women, driven from their homes, threw the bodies of their frozen children out of the goods train. Torture in cellars, the refinements of psychological compulsion. Families on the highway, births and deaths on the roads. Cannibalism in the camps in which Russian prisoners-of-war were starving. Concentration camps everywhere in the world. We know much. We suspect more, and sometimes we also experience something, and some among us experience a great deal. Perhaps a dwelling in ruins which cannot be heated. Or it may be life in a cellar in which the water runs down the walls. Or currency reform eats up for the second time what remains of one's savings, while a neighbour, perhaps, has invested his gains in the black market in goods. Or a family of refugees waits in hutments for a house; or finds a house, only to discover that it is a hell. At the sight of visible cruelty a shiver runs down our backs, but what we see are only the extreme instances of a much more general condition; behind one who is starving stand thousands who are hungry, and hundreds of thousands who never have enough to eat. Behind one act of treachery which cries to Heaven, there lurks a mass of petty treacheries. A single suicide expresses the despair of millions. A single death represents an intolerable succession of pinpricks.

That is admittedly not the whole truth. Even to-day other things still persist—trust, love, industry, loyalty. There are

islands of a more normal life, in which millions regard themselves as safe. But we know that this security is deceptive.

If anyone says that this Jeremiad betrays not only a sensitive disposition, but " quantitative thinking ", and that the death pangs of ten thousand men are not harder to endure than those of a single individual, we shall say to him that he is quite right, that the whole misery of humanity cries out from a single glance of a single tormented child, and that the question of the evil of the world (and the still darker problem of its guilt) unrolls its whole depth in a single instance. But the *experience* of this illimitable ocean of meaninglessness and pain is something different from the experience of the suffering of an individual, or even of many individuals. It is not simply that it is greater in scale, but that with this increase of scale the *whole* is called in question in a new way—the condition of the world as a whole.

This new content is the culmination of a long preparation. Since the world became smaller, suffering has come nearer to us. There have been many hundreds of famines in China for thousands of years. For a few hundreds of years we have known about them ; for thirty years we have heard about them on the radio. In the same degree our reactions have become less sensitive : we push the knowledge of human misery and meaninglessness away from us, and without this callousness, which has left its mark upon our faces, we should not be able to go on generation after generation. *But is this callousness the solution of the problem ?* One of the greatest temptations of men is to refuse to change in the presence of new facts. *The coming nearer to us of world misery is one such fact.*

THE BENEVOLENT FATHER AND THE CRUEL GOD

It is to this kind of a world that the Church proclaims a God who is almighty and compassionate, a benevolent Father, who numbers the hairs of your head and accompanies every one of your steps with His providential love.

It is not a question of a new mass apostasy from belief in God. The decay of faith in Europe lies much further back, and it was not despair alone which was the cause of it, but also human pride. But religious statistics tell us little about the decisive matter. There are acts of " trust " which in reality are acts of fear. There is a kind of piety in which religion is an escape. There is a way

of " believing " for which God is a guarantee of one's own self-seeking. But what of that *real* childlike trust, in which all fear and self-seeking seem to have been transcended ? Is it not the mission of that kind of faith calmly and humbly to triumph over all the agony of the world ? That is indeed the core of the life of true Christian piety. But there is also a type of childlikeness which can be maintained only at the cost of blindness. Christ urges us, not to *remain* children, but to *become like* children. We must not try to rid ourselves of the sobering experiences, the enlightenments, the disillusionments which are inseparable from the waking life of the adult. We have, on the contrary, to take them with the utmost seriousness, and to incorporate them in the " Yes " of a reborn childhood and a higher simplicity.

Has that really happened with the sobering experiences and disillusionments of recent decades ? Ask yourself the question. Think of your small daily conflicts and of the word about the lilies of the field. If this triumph had taken place in the hearts not merely of a few, but of many, Christendom after *these* experiences would be an invincible generation of mature and courageous, wise and humble, fighters, workers and intercessors.

Oh ! but, it may be said, we already have formulae for the evil in the world. In the catechism everything finds its solution. The insanity and horror has all been foreseen and assigned its place—original sin, the secret of freedom and evil, God's unsearchable ways, reward and compensation in Heaven. But are *we ourselves*, we with our flesh and blood and all the motions of our souls, in face of the outward and inward misery that works and ferments in us, as fear, inertia, despondency, and mistrust—are we ourselves at the height of these truths ? Are they strong enough in ourselves to stand up to the most terrible experiences ? Or are they valid only in the special region of our consciousness which we have reserved for religion, and only because, and in so far as, we relegate these testing experiences to some other region of our consciousness ?

Our God is a cruel God. No man could look on the mass of pain and cruelty that He looks on. And He, the All-knowing, does not turn His eyes away from it. He gazes on the mountain of misery and has done so for hundreds and thousands of years, and every groan reaches His ear. Have we known that ?

Certainly we have always known it, but it now seems that we have *seen* it—the meaningless misery of tortured creatures and the silence of God.

In view of all this—let us make no mistake—the conception of a fatherly God, which has for so long filled and comforted Christian hearts, is in danger of losing all its power. The Father in Heaven, men have believed in the past, guides with care and love the course of the life of each individual, assigns to each suffering or happiness as a means of proving and testing him. The average Christian has in the past believed in a direct way in the " dispensations " which come to him from God, both good and bad. Even if that was obscure in individual instances, or if as a whole it transcended the power of the imagination, it was still as a whole at least thinkable and could be pictured in individual instances ; above all, it could be experienced. But this conception and experience have for long been exposed to excessive strain ; can they stand up against the carpet of bombs, that annihilating storm of calculated destructive power and of accident ? A breath of wind, a minute delay in the reaction time of the airman who made the release suffices to make the missile strike one house and spare another. And then the course of the splinters, the molecular processes of the exploding material. . . . To the man who takes the whole matter to heart and thinks it out to the end, the whole seems nothing but a symbol of a combination of wickedness (the wickedness which caused the war and its consequences) a pitiless law of causality and the purest chance. For, however much the different chains of causes may be in themselves a strictly closed system, they have not for our perception and experience the slightest relation to the fateful result which they have when they strike one person and spare another. The evil of men, a reign of law (whether of nature or of history) which remorselessly takes its course in utter disregard of us, and accident—these are the three forces which in devilish combination have driven the fatherly God from the horizon of our life.[1]

[1] This danger has been treated here only in relation to the outward fortunes of man. It would be profitable to probe deeper and explore its meaning in relation to his inner life and his historical and political fortunes. That would involve a Christian coming to terms, on the one hand, with analytical psychology and the experiences which it attempts to interpret, and, on the other hand, with Marxism and other political theories.

We have spoken of unbelief. We have spoken of doubt. We are speaking also, however, of a process within the sphere of faith—of conflict. We are speaking, that is to say, of the real, actual, ruling God, who acts in this way or who "permits" such happenings, whether it be that He systematically makes use of them to arrive at all the predetermined results which affect our actual lives, or whether He has resolved to leave, as it were, the human beings involved to the causalities and contingencies that have been mentioned. That is nothing new for the theologians, for whose intellectual task the results of modern atomic physics are much more fruitful than all these terrible experiences. But for a believing temper it is a tough morsel to swallow. To many it causes the deepest concern, and if there are other Christians who do not feel that concern, such insensitivity is not much to their credit, except for the happy few in whom the conflict has been really transcended in a purified faith.

All that we have been considering leads to one of two results. It either drives us away from faith or drives us back into faith. If God is our Father, we are His children. We must take this image seriously, for it is more than an image. In that case our pains are like those of children. They are certainly real pains in a real world, but for Him who stands as father above that children's world, and who can see through their disappointments and upsets, these have a transitional character, and, however real in experience, they are different from what they appear to the child. This comparison is a genuine attempt to understand, and in spite of its simplicity it has the great advantage that we begin at the right place—with God.

God manifestly does not share our sensitive attitude towards pain. He is able to burn, to cut, to watch someone entering into pain without holding him back. A sentimental father would take great pains to protect his children from every hurt. A father who loves them without fear of suffering allows them to pass through many griefs. He will look on while they move in their own world and he will experience in himself their desire and pain and risk. This sovereignty of an earthly father is certainly exercised within narrow limits. He has so little control over the totality of the world that, even as a strict educator, he must carefully keep

harm as far as he can from the minute patch for which he is responsible, and he often finds himself in a cleft stick between the exercise of his fatherly care and the need for educative sternness. Beyond all measure is the sovereignty of God, who allows men to go about with atom bombs. It is of the first importance not to dismiss this thought as merely a playful metaphor, but to face it in all candour. God's sovereignty is beyond measure, because the whole of the world lies in its power, above all, the whole of time and the whole of the future. The significance of this sovereignty lies in the fact that *death* is included in it. But death is the absolute limit of man and the real object of his anxiety; in it he faces the question of annihilation. It is death then that gives to pain its uneasy, menacing, all-devouring power. We scent death in pain. That death in the eyes of God is not the absolute limit of man, but a transition—that is what makes the real difference between our "childish" and His "fatherly" judgment of our pains. He is no less in sovereign control of death than we are of the small griefs of children, because He is not only Lord over our death, but Lord also of *new life*. If we were to attempt to represent to ourselves an earthly father in whose sovereignty the last remains of sentimentality had been dissolved, we should involve ourselves in a conception that was entirely inhuman—but not in the case of God. Let us have the courage to conceive of an insensitiveness to human pain—growing out of an overflowing and inexhaustible compassion and fatherly love, *out of an unconditional and absolute yes to every individual man.*

NEW LIFE

Here we pause. Our discussion has had throughout, two groups of people in view—ourselves as Christians, and the "others", the doubters and unbelieving, who watch our striving to reach a new understanding of our faith. Will they be willing to go on reading and accompany us further, since what we are talking about is not some choice piece from the arsenal of dogma, but in all seriousness a question arising out of the unbelievable belief of Christians in a "new life"? We come, however, with much hesitation to this point of stumbling. The "others" are accustomed to look on us as unaccountable devotees of antiquated rites and

legends or, as more understandably, members of a well-disciplined society, or—most understandable of all—as representatives of a particular philosophy and morality. We go to church on Sundays; we worship Jesus of Nazareth; we believe in altruism, personality and fellowship—all that is quite intelligible. That there should be a few old women who are better able to endure their ill-smelling poverty by believing in a beautiful and fragrant Heaven, with angels and their trumpets, is something that can be taken with the rest as part of the bargain. But to suppose that men in workaday clothes and intelligent housewives and youths who play football should seriously believe that a heavenly Father out of his overflowing love has designed for us a "new life"—that seems to have a savour of presumption. It is something, none the less, that we cannot spare those who are willing to read further.

God's absolute "Yes" to every individual man. It is clear that this "Yes" cannot relate to man as he now is—in the first place because of his exposure to pain and death, which reaches its climax in the inexorable pitilessness of God, of which we have spoken. Secondly, because of what we call "sin"—because of a fundamental quality in men, as they exist in history, which God cannot include in His absolute "Yes". (Many of those who do not like the word "sin" will not deny that they are aware of the thing itself in themselves.) God's "Yes", however, comprehends not merely a favoured part, as the love of an imperfect human lover might do, but the whole man—the man, that is to say, which each individual is in God's eternal purpose meant to be, a being beyond all pain and all sin, not detached from his body or separated from his unique individuality, but so radiant and so blessed *in* this his undiminished and unabridged humanity, that it would transcend all imagination, if God had not become man, and if the Son of Man had not given to the believer in faith and sacrament a "foretaste" of the reality for which he is destined. It is only to one in whom in His infinite patience God sees a saint, that He can assign a measureless quantity of earthly pain and meaninglessness. He expects so much from us because He sees us as His saints.

The new theological reflection on the "last things", and the return to an eschatological outlook corresponds exactly to the

common experience of which we are here speaking. The centre of gravity of the life of faith is transferred to the expectation of the new life, not as a " reward " or as " compensation ", but as the true fullness of life to which we have been called. And it is one of the signs of the present spiritual historical situation that the original Christian truth which is proclaimed in eschatology no longer finds a place merely in the system of dogma, but has come completely into the foreground and laid hold precisely of the most active Christians. It is the same Christian unrest which drives them on the one hand to Christian activity, and on the other, to Christian expectation of the new life. It belongs to the very nature of this expectation that the new life, since Christ and the first Whitsunday, has already broken into the world, creating in us, the citizens of two worlds, an inner unrest, driving us forward and ever demanding to be born in us anew. It drives us to activity, including political activity, i.e. to the modern realistic fulfilment of the precept of Christ, that in feeding the needy, in giving them drink and in clothing them, we are doing service to Himself. It drives us also, secretly, in spite of our resistance, towards the gate through which we must enter into the new life, namely to sacrifice—to our share in the sacrifice of love of the God who was executed.

There is no way in which in this discussion we can evade the fact of Christ. It was He who taught us to see the *Father*. The Father appointed for His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased a shameful fate, and He permits us to endure the senselessness and pain of the world, as the experiences of our own days. What we have been speaking of as the misery of man was His also, and our conflict was His conflict.

Christ died on the Cross, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. In these realities—realities which we do *not* see and do *not* know, but on which our faith, and through and from Him our life also, is founded—in the light of these realities the suffering of humanity takes on a new colour. As the saints went out to meet their suffering, because in it they walked in the footsteps of the crucified Christ, so humanity would go out willingly to meet its pain, if it could conceive it as the gateway to that for which it is destined, and above all as its own goal of blessedness. And we, who are not saints, can catch a faint glimpse of all that dimly in the first

beginnings of sainthood that have been granted to us. All that —the shipwreck, the sacrifice, the death, the resurrection.

Here, then, is to be found the key to what we experience as the cruelty of God. The measure of the horrors which He permits can serve only as an indication of the measure of glory which He has prepared for those who believe in Him, and even this measure does not exhaust the truth. If we were to live wholly in this faith, it would remove mountains. Or since it is no particular concern of ours or of God to remove mountains, this faith and the readiness to face pain which comes from it—it is in the readiness to face pain that both St. Thomas Aquinas and Ernst Jünger have found the essence of courage—would transform the social world of the five continents. And in a way that is only in appearance paradoxical, through such readiness to suffer, not indeed the whole of suffering, but very much suffering would vanish from this earth. If you were to live wholly by this faith, you would at God's bidding be able to heal the sick with your hands.

The misery of men leads many to nihilism. In reality it is a twofold call—to brotherly helpfulness and to a deeper trust. It is not a cultural programme that can give courage to those who in the name of Christ participate in the undertakings of the world, but only the double "Yes" that is the response to this call—the practical and palpable "Yes" to a suffering fellow man, and the purified "Yes" of trust in Him who is still, in spite of all appearances, the Father.

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